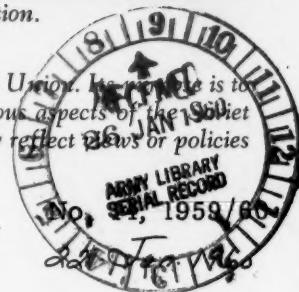


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Outline of Reference Paper On:

FAILURE OF KHRUSHCHEV GRAIN CAMPAIGN

by

Simon S. Kabysh

Mr. Kabysh, who was born and brought up in Belorussia, was graduated in 1934 from the Institute of National Economy in Minsk. He worked in the fields of public education and economic organization in Soviet Belorussia until his arrest by the NKVD late in 1940. Released from prison after the flight of the Soviet authorities in 1941, he has lived in Germany since 1944. He is a scientific associate on agriculture on the staff of the Institute for the Study of the USSR in Munich and has contributed many articles and scholarly reports to various Institute publications and Belorussian emigre newspapers.

The December, 1959, plenum of the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee closed on an indecisive and -- for the Soviet regime -- unsatisfactory note. Khrushchev was compelled to admit to the plenum delegates that Soviet agriculture output for 1959 was well below 1958 levels. He assigned the blame for this situation to poor planning and organization by the regional authorities and discounted such explanations for the debacle as bad summer weather, to say nothing of any possible mistakes he might have made. Whatever the real reasons for the drop in output, it does not augur well for the future of Khrushchev's much touted Seven-Year-Plan, with its goal of equality with the United States in all spheres in 1965. For 1959, the first year of the Plan, the Central Committee plenum was obliged to listen to a confession of defeat, not a forecast of victory.

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No. 14, 1959/60

FAILURE OF KHRUSHCHEV GRAIN CAMPAIGN

ADMISSION BY DECEMBER 1959 CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM

by

Simon S. Kabysh

The summoning of a plenary session of the Party Central Committee each year in December is becoming something of a tradition in the Soviet Union. Such sessions took place in 1958 and 1959, and Khrushchev has announced his intention of holding another in December, 1960.

The purpose of the plenums in 1958 and 1959 was to demonstrate the success of the agricultural policy pursued by the present leaders of the Party Central Committee and by Khrushchev personally, and thereby raise the latter's prestige and strengthen his position as sole ruler of the country. Khrushchev had placed great hopes upon the Central Committee session held in December, 1959, at which he had intended to draw attention to the achievements of the first year of his Seven-Year-Plan. Preparations for the session had been in progress for almost the entire year: the date of its opening was announced almost six months beforehand. But although Soviet propaganda about 1959's agricultural successes had lost much of its enthusiastic tone by the eve of the session's opening, the true state of affairs in Soviet agriculture was not revealed until the plenum was actually under way, and even then most of the truth came out only in Khrushchev's final speech.

One year before, at the December, 1958 plenary session of the Party Central Committee, Khrushchev had declared that "the basis of agricultural production is the grain economy" (Pravda, December 16, 1958), and it was upon the solution of this problem that the Central Committee's attention had been concentrated throughout 1959. As things turned out, however, Khrushchev's hopes were not fulfilled. Although Soviet statistics regarding the total grain harvest in the USSR for 1959 have not been published, it was announced before the opening of the plenum that the amount of grain delivered to the state in 1959 was 600,000,000 poods; i.e. nearly 10,000,000 metric tons - less than in 1958- (Pravda, December 10, 1959), and at the meeting of the

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USSR Supreme Soviet in January, 1960, Khrushchev reported that in 1959 the state had purchased only 2,845,000,000 poods (about 46,600,000 metric tons) of grain (Pravda, January 15, 1960), that is to say, 18.7 per cent less than in 1958. It was these figures that largely determined the nature and outcome of the 1959 Central Committee plenary session.

Inefficiency, Drought Cause Farm Output Slump

The failure of the 1959 grain harvest to equal expectations was attributed by Khrushchev before the plenum opened, and by many others at the beginning of its proceedings, to the unfavorable summer weather. At the plenum, however, Khrushchev stated:

This year, the crop was good in Kazakhstan, but, as a result of poorly organized work, this crop was not all gathered in. By November 1, (1959), grain was still standing or awaiting collection over an area of 1,618,000 hectares* in the Republic (Pravda, December 29, 1959).

Khrushchev went on to say that this grain had eventually been covered by snow and thus destroyed. The main reason for this disaster, he said, was the fact that "32,000 combines, 21,000 pickups and 11,000 reaping machines on the sovkhozes (state farms) and kolkhozes (collective farms) of Kazakhstan did not take part in the gathering in of the harvest." These machines, he said, had stood idle because of the shortage of combine and reaping machine operators. Khrushchev also declared, thereby revealing the falseness of his own previous assertion that the weather had been responsible for the disruption of agricultural plans, that

When preparations should have already been under way for gathering in the harvest, the sowing was only just being finished in Kazakhstan. Why throw the blame on Providence and say that the grain didn't ripen? You sow in good time, and then, you will see God will say, "You have done your job--now I shall do Mine."

The plenum acknowledged that the principal cause of the low yield on kolkhozes and sovkhozes was inefficiency--a failure to observe the elementary rules of agriculture:

Sowing is not done on time, proper use is not made of local fertilizers, the soil is inefficiently worked, the gathering in of crops is delayed, straw is not collected from the fields at the proper time, plans for fallow and autumn plowing are not carried out systematically (Pravda, December 27, 1959).

*

Ed: 1 acre=0.40468 hectares

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Until Khrushchev spoke at the plenum and mentioned the loss of several million hectares of grain, nothing at all had been said about this subject either in the Soviet press or in the speech made by Belyayev, the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan. On the contrary, as late as December 19, 1959, the All-Union Party Central Committee and Council of Ministers of the USSR lauded the Kazakhstan State and Party leaders for their successes in agriculture. On December 22, 1959, the day on which the plenum opened, Pravda declared in a leading article that "the whole country (had) received with feelings of the greatest satisfaction the news of the great successes of Kazakhstan in grain production and agricultural development generally."

It is evident that during the course of its deliberations the Party Central Committee Plenum was obliged for some reason to change its tune. It is also evident that Khrushchev's speech, as it was finally delivered, contained certain changes and departures from the previously-prepared text. This is probably the reason why the speech was not printed until December 29, 1959.

Khrushchev Blames Local Party Leaders

One of the major causes of the failure to deliver the expected grain quota to the state was the poor harvest in the virgin lands, although these lands actually did not suffer a drought in 1959. The cultivation of these lands, which is still very unpopular in the USSR, was entirely Khrushchev's idea. This time, Khrushchev was unable to avoid losing prestige by accusing "anti-Party" or "fractional" groups. Consequently, he attempted to place the entire blame for the situation in Kazakhstan upon the leaders of that Republic and upon Belyayev in particular, charging them with having concealed the true state of affairs from him. Khrushchev declared:

I asked you, Comrade Belyayev, what you still needed in order to ensure a timely gathering in of the harvest. You replied: "Nothing is needed. We've received everything, everything will be done." That, comrades, is how the matter stands in actual fact (Pravda, December 29, 1959).

The fact that the Soviet press was already writing about the shortage of combine operators and other farm workers in Kazakhstan on the eve of the summer 1959 harvest campaign makes it clear that this statement by Khrushchev was a piece of utter hypocrisy:

The Republic is short of 62,000 combine operators, 58,000 combine drivers and 29,000 operators for reaping machines. What has become of the combine operators? As a matter of fact, there was a shortage of them in previous years (Komsomolskaya Pravda, Young Communist Pravda, June 30, 1959).

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It is noteworthy that the attacks upon Belyayev and many other leading Party members were bitter and even offensive in tone. Even under Stalin, members of the Central Committee Presidium, unless they were already doomed to physical extinction, were not subjected to such biting public condemnation as Belyayev, who is also a member of the Central Committee Presidium, has now suffered at Khrushchev's hands. The entire affair testifies to the existence of a state of tension within the leadership of the Central Committee.

Plenum Has Indecisive Results

Despite the fact that the question of reorganizing the kolkhozes has been discussed extensively before and during the plenum, the resolution adopted on this question by the plenum was only of a general nature:

The tasks of further improving agriculture demand a change in the organizational forms of leadership in the kolkhozes, tending toward the further development of kolkhoz democracy (Pravda, December 27, 1959).

It was affirmed in a general way that the best solution to this question would be the creation of "unions of kolkhozes" (kolkhozsoyuzy), that is, associations of kolkhozes at various levels of the governmental structure designed to secure better state control over agriculture, and the plenum directed the Presidium of the Central Committee to study this question. It should be borne in mind that the "unions of kolkhozes" were originally created by Stalin as an instrument of his leadership in the years 1927-32, and that he did not abolish them until after he had created the machine-tractor stations. The present return to Stalin's old policy of using unions of kolkhozes as a means of state control merely indicates that Khrushchev's recent liquidation of the machine-tractor stations was not such a brilliant and original step as he tried to make out. It has not consolidated the kolkhozes, but has complicated the task of controlling them.

To sum up, it may be said that the December, 1959 plenary session of the Party Central Committee was not a great success. It could not serve as an occasion for the regime to point out to new achievements in agriculture, the purpose for which it had originally been called--and it was also unable to produce any practical results, ending as it did with no concrete decisions.

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